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SUBJECT FULL TEXT

WOMAN: [Unintelligible] my family, my brother, [unintelligible]. I knew that I have to get out [unintelligible] my husband.

MAN: After terrible years, I still think of [unintelligible].

MAN: [Unintelligible].

GENE HAMIL: In the years since Fidel Castro came to power, more than 700,000 Cubans have chosen to leave the island for the United States. The great majority settled in Miami. But many of those who came to the Northeast chose to live here and in the small towns nearby. Twenty-five thousand are living in Union City. They have transformed the old Irish-German neighborhoods, but that was never their intention. For a long time they insisted that they were exiles, not immigrants. They had chosen to leave Castro's Cuba, but had not chosen to become Americans. Life here was a mere parenthesis. Someday they would all go home.

That parenthesis has now lasted 23 years, and more and more Cubans are becoming Americans. For some, the old dream of toppling Castro has faded. Others cherish that dream, but wish to exert political power in the places where they've settled.

For whatever reasons, the exiles are becoming immigrants and their children are becoming Americans. Still, it's fair to say that their dreams and their disappointments were made in Cuba

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and are being lived out in places like Union City, a long way from home.

I'm Gene Hamil (?). For the next hour, we'll be examining the lives of some of those inhabitants of a country of exile.

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[Singing in Spanish]

HAMIL: Within weeks of Fidel Castro's triumph in 1959, the first of the Cuban exiles were arriving in Miami. Most of them were white, middle-class, and urban. And while some were followers of the dictator Fulgencio Batista, others were liberal intellectuals, social democrats, or disillusioned members of Castro's own 26th of July movement. Very few thought that they would stay long in the United States. There would be a counter-revolution, Castro would be toppled, and all of them would soon go home. They were sure of that. They were exiles, they said, here for political reasons, temporary residents. They were not immigrants.

MAN: I came to the United States when my -- only with my wife because we thought there was a nightmare and maybe in six months the new regime was over. But it was not true. And after a year, one year -- in other words, when we have a year in the United States, we come to conclusion that to bring the kids.

HAMIL: But in 1961, a CIA-backed exile invasion ended in catastrophe in the swamps of the Bay of Pigs. And in 1962, the fate of the exiles was sealed when John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev ended the Missile Crisis with a deal. Khrushchev removed his missiles from Cuba in exchange for Kennedy's vow never to invade Castro's Cuba.

PRESIDENT JOHN KENNEDY: The Soviet missile bases in Cuba are being dismantled. Their missiles and related equipment are being crated. And the fixed installations at these sites are being destroyed.

HAMIL: Through the years since, more waves of exiles arrived in the United States. The later arrivals were still urban and white, but no longer middle-class. These working-class exiles came for more classic reasons, to improve their economic lot.

But in 1980, one final wave began to leave from the Cuban port of Mariel, and they were different. For the first time, blacks were among the exiles. And of 123,000 new arrivals, some 24,000 have served some time in jail.

About earlier exiles, Castro had once quoted Don Quixote, "For my enemy, I will build a silver bridge." But during the last wave, he emptied Cuban jails of criminals and undesirables. Some of the Marielitos were soon in trouble in the United States. Others worked hard to get on with their lives. But all of the Cuban exiles shared one common experience. They had come a long way from home, and they had paid a price.

WOMAN: I never thought how [unintelligible] here, because I remember my mother in Cuba many times asking me [unintelligible]. And then when I came here, I said, "Oh, my God. Maybe [unintelligible]."

MAN: [Unintelligible].

MAN: My family had opposed the dictatorship of Batista before. In other words, all of them had opposed it. But my father had the vision to turn around and say, "No. This is going to be for our demise as a country." And yet my father's major wish was to return to die there someday. And my mother the same way.

WOMAN: It makes me sad to think, you know, you can go through [unintelligible]. I ma happy here, but, you know, I would like [unintelligible] I can go there when I want. [Unintelligible].

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HAMIL: This Potito de Rivera (?). He is one of the finest saxophone players in the world. The woman is his mother. She came to the United States from Cuba in 1968. But Potito stayed on. Trained by his musician father, he played for a number of bands, and finally helped form the great Cuban jazz band called Irequera (?). In Cuba, he had a family, a good job by Cuban standards, and prestige. They weren't enough.

[Musical interlude]

POTITO DE RIVERA: All my life I dream to come to New York and play jazz music here, to be in this country.

Anything in Cuba -- not only in Cuba, but in all the socialist countries, there have to be some kind of political [unintelligible], always. Even when you don't do political songs. Any kind of artistry [unintelligible], have to be political [unintelligible], always. And I don't care at all about politics. I don't like it. I don't trust it. Not on the left, not on the right. I don't care about that. Of course, I have my idea, but I don't like to talk about it.

So, if you say that in a socialist country, immediately

you are against the system. That sounds very funny, especially for Americans. And I say, "I don't care."

Somebody, when the election was running here, said, "Who do you prefer, Ronald Reagan or Carter?" I said, "Dizzy Gillespie."

[Musical interlude]

DE RIVERA: They call jazz sometimes imperialist music. You know, in some way, they identify jazz with North America, and North America [unintelligible] the enemy. So jazz [unintelligible] North America. That's very funny, you know, that it is that way.

It was a very hard decision because I had my children there. I lost my marriage and my country and my friends in there and my land and the whole thing. But everything in life has a price. I paid a very high price.

[Clip of De Rivera performing]

[Largely unintelligible remarks by Mrs. De Rivera]

HAMIL: This is Rafael Tomas. He came to this country in the flotilla from Mariel in 1980. In Cuba he had been a singer in a piano bar in the town of Cienfuegos, but wanted to move on to the big leagues. He was told that there were too many singers in Havana, so he chose to leave. He went from Miami to a refugee camp in Pennsylvania, and eventually to Union City. There he met a 46-year-old exiled banker named Luis Faya (?) who came from Rafael's home town. Faya decided to guide the young man's career. The route has not been easy.

RAFAEL TOMAS: In my country, it's difficult for the artist. It's necessary for the artist to participate in the revolution, you know. With me, I have many problems because I don't like the [unintelligible] system, the system. I have many problems.

[Conversation in Spanish]

RAFAEL FAYA: [Unintelligible]

TOMAS: For example, I go to Havana because I like work in Havana. But I can't because I belong in Cienfuegos, you know? I cannot go to Havana. I cannot work in Havana. No. Or in the whole field, you know. Only Cienfuegos.

FAYA: The first time I saw him, the people from Cienfuegos over here, they have a party, in the month April. And most of the people from Cienfuegos in this neighborhood go to

that party. And he was sitting in the table next to where I was sitting. And then he went to the stage and he played two songs. And that's how we met.

Then I didn't see him for a while, until I came one Sunday for dinner at the [unintelligible] and he was playing there. And then I asked him if he could play that song [unintelligible] from our home town. And he played that song. And I liked very much [unintelligible]. And that's how the whole thing started.

[Rafael Tomas performing]

FAYA: You try to help your countrymen. And he's not the only one [unintelligible] trying to help him. [Unintelligible] they can have a better life here. [Unintelligible].

TOMAS: I want come back to Cuba because this is my country. In this country with my family, sometime I think maybe I don't see it never more.

HAMIL: While Potito de Rivera has been accepted in the country of jazz, Rafael Tomas, so far, has been confined to the clubs of the Cuban diaspora, places where the world seems to have stopped in 1958.

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HAMIL: No one can quarrel with one generalization about Cuban exiles. They work very hard. With the help of several billion dollars in refugee aid and a lot of hard work, the earlier generation of middle-class exiles eventually settled back into the middle class. They have transformed Eighth Street in Miami and Bergen Line Avenue in Union City.

But more than half the exiles remain working-class, particularly the later arrivals. They work in factories and sweatshops and at mean jobs.

MAN: I used to go to the movies, you know, and see all the things beautiful here. I always liked this country. I saw so many, I was a fanatic with movies. Especially that guy John Wayne. I used to like him a lot. I used to like everything about this country. That's why I came over here, one of the reasons I came.

I was like a bakery man. You know, I used to make bread, things like that. My father was an insurance man. He used to sell insurance. And he dies, you know. I was the head of the family. That's I went and came over here. You get more opportunity in this country than in Cuba in that time.

I've been working in the [unintelligible] -- well, you figure it out -- 30 years or more.

WOMAN: Most of the work here, they, you know, they have clerks and everything. And they -- you know, today you have to have a lot of money to [unintelligible] the family. They have no husbands. And they support themselves and the kids, you know? That's why they have to work hard. They get paid by the garment, not by the hour. Sometimes it depends on their work. Sometimes they make four dollars, sometimes they make six. It depends how hard -- yeah, an hour. Yeah. Not less than four dollars.

If you work hard, here in America you can get -- you know, [unintelligible] if you don't work. A lot of people I know, they have [unintelligible]. My husband and I will work a lot. We work a lot.

HAMIL: More than 50 percent of Cuban women work to help make ends meet. Still, there have been some remarkable success stories.

This is Marcia Julian. She arrived here with her parents in 1961. Today she hosts a variety show on Channel 41.

MARCIA JULIAN: I come from a very strict family, very, very strict family. I have three brothers and I'm the only girl. And I was brought up to get married and have a family, and that's it. I mean there was no such thing as, you know, being a professional, and never mind the idea of working on TV or anything that had to do with show business.

My brothers, they all got together in a big reunion with my father, and "You're letting your daughter getting involved in TV," and all this. "It's going to bring shame to the family," you know.

So finally I convinced them. I said, "Hey, I mean this is it. We live in America." I said, "I don't want to be the typical housewife. I have other ideas. And I really enjoy this. And I think I can do it. There is nothing wrong with that."

It's very hard to have a family and to be with your children and to be running around and to do a show. But if I don't work, she doesn't eat, or I don't eat, or she won't have a good education. And I feel a conflict of the family and the conflict that I have at the same time, you know, looking pretty and acting and interviewing everybody. And all of a sudden, at 10:30 the taping is over, and take off the makeup and run home because, you know, child is home and you go into motherhood and then she's so sweet and innocent and lovely, and you say, "My God. I've got to spend my time with her. I've got to enjoy her." And when I tell her I've got to go to work, she says, "No,

Mommy. I don't want you to go to work." [Unintelligible] she's building up this front.

So you know what Mommy has to do tonight?

CHILD: What?

JULIAN: I've got to go work.

CHILD: No.

JULIAN: I believe [unintelligible] I probably would be married [unintelligible] would have gone to Havana, because you never know, really, where your future will take you. Because of what happened in Cuba, and there's a little theory called the domino theory and all that crazy little thing back there in the mind stored someplace. I don't know, I always [unintelligible]. I mean I learned how to be a beautician, and I can do anything besides working in TV. And I'm ready for anything. I'm ready for action. I'm ready to jump in a boat.

It's a memory that I cannot erase from my mind, you know. I'm an exile, in a sense. I consider this my country already and I'm adapted to the way of living here, but it's a memory that I cannot erase. And we are a product of what happened.

[Clip of TV show conducted in Spanish]

HAMIL: In Cuba before Fidel, Ricardo Capote (?) had it made. He owned the largest Cuban-owned cookie factory on the island, a factory that was nationalized in 1961. Today he owns eight McDonald's franchises in the metropolitan area.

RICARDO CAPOTE: I got a dime in the airport from Cuba. Okay? I didn't know how to spend the dime, because I didn't know that the friend that I'm going to call to pick me up in the airport, okay, he's going to have car because he just came in a month before me. Okay?

And then [unintelligible] came in, the two girls. And so many, many, many months, almost a year, we stay in Miami. Okay? Then we get up in the morning and we got only a quarter. Right? Okay? And we can't spend it because that was the milk for the girls in the morning.

[Unintelligible] in the Cuba, that the government came in and he take your property. Okay? And all the 600 employee in the factory. And they come in April 6th, 1961 at 2:20. I can never forget that. April 6th at 2:20. That's the day for me.

[Clip of restaurant activities]

CAPOTE: They came in right away. They surrounded the whole factory with soldiers, they come in in truck. And he was a captain that I know, and he was the person in charge of the consolidating of the flavors. Everything that was bakery or had anything with bakery, the was the director or the consolidator.

He went on top of the table and he just say that they'd taken that factory over because of the needs of the government.

We took the two girls and we sent them to the firm, because they having [unintelligible] rights in the firm yet. And we stay one month playing Monopoly.

I feel like I lost my country. If this government now [unintelligible] and put enough money over there [unintelligible] against the Communists that they are being taken [unintelligible] Central America. I feel that [unintelligible]. I don't have the money, okay, to do that. So why should I dream that way?

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HAMIL: The fanatic anti-Communism of some Cuban exiles sometimes borders on the comic. The type was best defined by exile writer Ivan Acosta in the movie based on his play "El Super."

[Film clip in Spanish]

HAMIL: But there remain Cuban exiles for whom the long struggle is not funny at all. They are serious men.

This is a man named Humberto Perez, a veteran of the Bay of Pigs. He is the military chief of an exile group called Alfa 66. It was formed in 1961 and claims to have made hundreds of small-scale raids on the Cuban mainland.

HUMBERTO PEREZ: We know that the only way that Castro has to be out of power is by the Cuban people. We are opposed to any intervention with the United States. We don't want Reagan or other President send the men into Cuba. We don't have the support in that way. The only thing we wanted, to recognize the right to fight. Every man have the right to fight or die for the freedom of their own country. I think the fight for the freedom of our country is in Cuba, inside the island, where the people who oppose, oppress our country are not here in the United States.

The only thing was we condemn Castro to die anyplace. Wherever he go, if we can kill Castro, yes. We're breaking any kind of law [unintelligible]. If Castro comes to here or to another country, we will have the chance to kill him, we try to eliminate him.

HAMIL: There are other exile groups who operate much closer to home. This man's name is Eduardo Arosana (?). He was not available for an interview because he is currently a fugitive. The FBI believes that he is the leader of the most successful terrorist group in the United States, an outfit called Omega 7.

It is probably safe to say that Omega 7 creates more fear among Cuban exiles than in Cuba itself. Very few exiles will discuss Omega 7, even those who oppose its methods. Since coming into existence in 1974, Omega 7 has been responsible for at least 40 bombings and at least three murders, all in territory of the United States.

They were particularly furious during the thaw in American relations with Cuba in 1978. Exiles who took advantage of the thaw to visit relatives in Cuba were denounced as traitors to the cause. Leaders of the movement to normalize relations with Castro were threatened and at least two were killed. Lolaulo Jose Nagrin (?) was machine-gunned to death in front of his 12-year-old son in Union City in November 1979. Carlos Muniz was murdered on April 28th, 1979 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

MARIANA MARSAO: To the people that knew him, like myself, while he was doing what he was doing, who shared the same innocence that I shared and his friends shared in this process, we arrived at our positions through a totally honest process. And he was, you know, brutally assassinated. It was very, very critical for us.

HAMIL: This is Mariana Gaston, national coordinator for the Antonio Marsao (?) Brigade, a group of young Cuban-Americans who sympathize with Fidel Castro. When Carlos Muniz was murdered, he was a prominent member of this group.

GASTON: The right wing feels reinforced by the politics of [unintelligible]. So, therefore, we don't feel [unintelligible]. They don't feel so threatened by us, you know. With a dialogue, the wave of terrorism was because it was a very significant, you know, position, you know, within the Cuban community. You know, it made an impact, a very, very serious -- it threatened the right wing. And it did. It just really crashed the right wing domination of the community, the dialogue. And it's forever broken.

We view the revolutionary process in Cuba since 1959 as a process which is irreversible and which is -- we view it as a popular process which is supported by the majority of the Cuban people. That's how we view the revolutionary process in Cuba.

HAMIL: Why do you think so many writers and artists have left Cuba?

GASTON: There has been a lot of pressure on intellectuals, as I understand it, to refrain from serious [unintelligible] criticisms that may weaken their united position vis-a-vis the attacks from the United States Government, you know, and the West of socialist Cuba.

So, some people resent that kind of demands. You know, they want to be what they want to be and they don't want to be part of the collective responsibility.

IVAN ACOSTA: All dictators are afraid of artist, writers, intellectuals, right and left. And, you know, and he's a simple dictator. It doesn't matter...

HAMIL: The man on the left is Ivan Acosta, a playwright and television producer. He arrived here with his parents when he was 16. His plays, including "El Super," deal with various aspects of the exile experience.

ACOSTA: When you have lost that past, like the Cuban have lost, so they have wanted to create outside Cuba that Cuba that was lost in 1959. So, therefore, you go to Miami and it's like living in Cuba in 1959, except that they have 1983 cars. You go to Cuba and they still have the 1959 cars.

RENALDO ARENAS: I have to write about Cuba this is my life, completely, more or less, the most important part of my life.

HAMIL: This is Renaldo Arenas, one of the best modern Cuban novelists. And early supporter of Fidel Castro, he ended up in one of Castro's jails. He left from Mariel in 1980.

ARENAS: I think many, many writer left Cuba because in Cuba there is not freedom. And I think writer, artists are the people who needs freedom for working. Because I think some people who -- for example, who sell something don't need enough freedom like the writer. Writer is -- the book is some manifestation of freedom.

ACOSTA: In 1961 Fidel Castro made a very famous speech where he said that within the revolution, everything; outside the revolution, nothing. So whoever wanted to write anything that wasn't related to the revolution or anything that would criticize the revolution even a little bit, that wasn't permit. So that was really the beginning of the writers' exodus.

HAMIL: If you could sit down with him here and talk to him, what would you say?

ACOSTA: Okay. I think I would ask him why he has done to Cuba what he has done. I believe that I would like to know

what is in his brain, why he has done to the Cuban people what he has done for 23 years.

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HAMIL: This is the Lyseo Cubana Jose Marti, a social club that is one of the institutions of the exile community of Union City. Some of these men were still young when they left Cuba. They are growing old now, waiting for the fall of Fidel.

MAN: [Unintelligible] I want Castro out.

MAN: I give you 24 hours to get out of Cuba. If he say, "I need it," [unintelligible] I say, "I give you 12."

MAN: When I started working, I [unintelligible] 11 years old. This was years ago. And I get ten cents a week. But with that ten cents a week, I go to the movie, have a drink of soda, got to eat a hamburger, everything for ten cents. You know, this was in 1935 [unintelligible].

MAN: I don't think any Cuban invasion is going to knock down Castro, with no American help or any country help. I don't know, but every country in South America, when you go in them, they are afraid of Castro.

MAN: And the only thing I know, the Cuban people, they got [unintelligible] everybody.

MAN: [Unintelligible] 21 years, 22 years. When Castro come to Cuba, he never do nothin' for the Cuban people. They didn't do nothin'. The only people they did something, any President of the United States, Kennedy, John F. Kennedy. Somebody killed him.

HAMIL: But for an increasing number of Cubans, there is no longer any time for the past. They must work to feed and clothe and house their children. Those children grow up on American streets and go to American schools and eventually get married in American churches. They are the Cuban-American young, people like Roberto Meer and Maritsa Perez.

ROBERTO MEER: We really forced to leave because, you know, the way of life in Cuba was very bad, and is really bad. But I'm not waiting for it to be free to go back because I don't want to go back. You know, I love Cuba a lot, you know, because that's my country. But I also love the United States because they took me in. And, you know, I've got to thank them a lot for that. No other country does that. Only America does that.

MEER: My father used to sell barrels on a truck and my mother used to like wash clothe for people and stuff like that.

MARITSA PEREZ: [Unintelligible] dance that song. And it always gets me emotional when I hear it [unintelligible]....

My father and mother [unintelligible] a factory when they came after a while. And it went really bad and they had to sell it, and it was horrible. It's really bad working in a factory, like you're a robot. You do the same things. Like in an assembly line, you do that every single day. And they work a lot of hours, and they don't pay such good money. And they've had to go through that for a long time, until my mother [unintelligible] to go into a beauty school, and there she got her license and she opened up a beauty shop. And that's [unintelligible].

MEER: A lot of people that I know would rather be in Cuba right now, but they're here, you know. And they complain sometimes about, you know, America and stuff like that, and they would rather be in Cuba. Not me. I'd rather be here. You know, I'm fine here. And my children are going [unintelligible]. They're going to be born here. They're not going to be born in Cuba. So they'll be Americans.

HAMIL: There they go, the children of the Cuban past moving into the American future. The Cubans were not the first exiles to come to this country and they will not be the last. But it can be said that the United States has been good and generous to them. And certainly the Cubans have helped enrich the great American melting pot.

For thousands, however, the past will continue to exert its inexorable pressure. These are the people who were made in Cuba. But the future belongs to their children, and is made in America.

This is Pete Hamil in Union City, New Jersey, 1602 miles from Havana.